

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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IGA-02 DRC-01 /169 W

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R 151650Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4191

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0252

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS

SUBJ: HIGH TUNISIAN ECONOMIC OFFICIAL DESCRIBES
LIBYAN-TUNISIAN UNITY AS "HOAX" WHICH SHOULD
NOT FRIGHTEN FOREIGN INVESTORS.

1. IN DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFF REGARDING POSSIBLE PUBLICITY
OF GOT DESIRE ATTRACT AMERICAN PRIVATE INVESTMENT,
TIGANI CHELLI, FORMER MINISTER NATIONAL ECONOMY AND
PRESENTLY PRESIDENT INVESTMENT PROMOTION AGENCY, DESCRIBED
PROPOSED LIBYAN-TQNISIAN UNITY AS "HOAX" (FUMISTERIE).
HE SAID ANNOUNCEMENT, HOWEVER, CREATING GREAT UNCERTAINTY
AMONG FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN WHO HAD PLANNED PURSUE INVESTMENT
PROJECTS HERE AND DOING SERIOUS DAMAGE TO TUNISIAN IMAGE.
HE HAD JUST RECEIVED LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE CALL FROM
REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY WHO QUESTIONED
ADVISABILITY OF PROCEEDING WITH PLANS SEND HIGH-LEVEL
DELEGATION TO TUNISIA EARLY FEBRUARY TO EXPLORE
POSSIBLE INVESTMENTS IN TEXTILE SECTOR. HE HAD ALSO
RECEIVED NUMEROUS OTHER CALLS AND WIRES INQUIRING AS
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TO PRESENT GOT INTENTIONS. CHELLI SAID THAT HE HAD

BROUGHT CONCERN OF FOREIGN BUSINESS TO ATTENTION OF PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA WITH STRONG RECOMMENDATION THAT ANNOUNCEMENT BE MADE AT HIGHEST LEVEL ASSURING OUTSIDE WORLD THAT REGARDLESS OF WHAT FORM UNION WILL TAKE TUNISIA WILL HONOR ITS OBLIGATIONS AND AGREEMENTS AND WILL MAINTAIN PRESENT LIBERAL ECONOMIC POLICY. HE FELT SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT MIGHT BE MADE LATER TODAY OR THURSDAY AFTER SCHEDULED CABINET MEETING.

2. CHELLI SAID THAT CALL FOR UNITY WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED. UNFORTUNATELY, ACCORDING CHELLI, PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT JAN 12 NOW PLACED GOT IN DIFFICULT POSITION IN TRYING BACK AWAY. IN FIRST PLACE, PRESTIGE OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IS NOW AT STAKE SINCE HE MADE ANNOUNCEMENT WITH QADHAFI. IN SECON PLACE, TUNISIA CAN NOT AFFORD TO ANTAGONIZE LIBYA LARGELY FOR ECONOMIC REASONS. LIBYANS HAVE AGREED TO PERMIT VIRTUALLY UNFETTERED ENTRY OF TUNISIAN PRODUCTS AND PROMISED SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO TUNISIA. GOT WILL HAVE TO USE GREAT CARE IN HOW IT PROCEEDS TO PERMIT UNITY TO DIE PEACEFULLY. IN MEANTIME, CHELLI ASSURED EMBOFF FOREIGN INVESTORS SHOULD PURSUE THEIR INTERESTS IN TUNISIA IN ALL CONFIDENCE AND OPIC SHOULD PROCEED WITH ITS PLANS TO BRING GOT'S DESIRE FOR GREATER FOREIGN INVESTMENT TO ATTENTION OF U.S. INDUSTRY.
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